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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT - TUESDAY, MAY 27, 2008

In Today's Papers

Gul Meets Gerceker to Ease AKP-Judiciary Tensions

All papers report that on Monday, President Abdullah Gul met at the Presidential Palace with the chief of the Court of Appeals (Yargitay,) Hasan Gerceker, in an effort to defuse tensions between the ruling AKP government and the judiciary. Papers report Gerceker told Gul the declaration released last week by the Court of Appeals (Yargitay) did not aim to stoke tensions further. Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet quotes Gerceker as saying, "The government caused the tensions, not the judiciary. Therefore, the Government needs to take steps to resolve the problem." Gerceker also expressed unease with the Government for having submitted its judicial reform strategy draft to the EU before discussing the matter with the Turkish judiciary.

Before meeting with Gerceker, Gul released a statement warning all state institutions. "It is the task of all individuals and institutions to act in line with customs and traditions, and prevent the debates from reaching a point where they might damage the fundamental principles of the Constitution, Turkey's national interests and unity, as well as economic and political stability," the statement said. Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak writes, "President Gul's 'Cankaya Declaration' responds to the declarations of the Court of Appeals and the Council of State with a warning for stability." Papers report Gul would meet other top representatives of the judiciary in the coming days.

Editorial Commentary on Tensions between Judiciary and Government

"President Gul Intervenes in The Crisis"

Bilal Cetin commented in mainstream Vatan (5/27): "There is no doubt that President Gul is highly disturbed by the latest developments. He should have intervened before the developments turn into a crisis, but he couldn't. Because of his previous position as Foreign Minister and the inclusion of his name in the Chief Prosecutor's indictment, there are certain limitations on what he can say and do. The President couldn't intervene to ease political tensions because the CHP still continues to protest Gul's presidency. Moreover, the state institutions that have tense relations with the government do not fully trust in the President either. Gul was aware of these problems before he was elected president but he thought he could eliminate these problems and strengthen mutual trust. However, developments did not give Gul

time to do all this and the political crisis erupted too early. Yesterday, after realizing the crisis is deepening, President Gul invited Yargitay President Hasan Gerceker to the presidential palace. Prior to this meeting, Gul urged the government and the judiciary to be calm. Now, he is aiming to establish peace among the state institutes, which is a very difficult job."

Erdogan: AKP Closure Case Costs Turkey \$ 25 Billion

All papers report on Sunday Prime Minister Erdogan spoke to journalists aboard his plane while returning home from the oath-taking ceremony of Lebanon's newly elected President Michel Suleiman. Erdogan characterized the role of Turkey as mediator between Israel and Syria as "an issue of international importance." He said Turkey also played a role in helping the parties in Lebanon reach a compromise in electing Suleiman as president. "Turkey is not an Iron Curtain country, but there are efforts to build an Iron Curtain in Turkey," Erdogan said in response to a question on the possible impact of the closure case. Erdogan said his government was striving to keep foreign capital in the country as investors become spooked by the closure case. "We have to deal with terror, economic problems and the upcoming municipal elections. Whatever is going to happen, it should happen without delay," said Erdogan. He noted had the closure case not been launched, expected an inflow of foreign investments would be USD 25. On another question, Erdogan said the landmines along the 967-km border with Syria would be swept, and the cleaned area be opened to agriculture.

Editorial Commentary on AKP Closure Case Affecting Turkey

"Messages from Beirut"

Erdal Safak wrote in mainstream Sabah (5/27): "During his return flight from Beirut, Prime Minister Erdogan told reporters, 'The AKP closure case has cost Turkey \$25 billion in foreign investment because investors became nervous about Turkey's stability and started investing in other countries. We would like the closure case to be finalized as soon as possible. We don't want Turkey to be hurt by this case, we don't want the economy suffer, and we don't want the fight against terrorism to be affected. This could also affect local elections in March. Therefore, whatever is going to happen must happen.' As our plane landed in Esenboga, the new Lebanese President Misel Suleyman's words were echoing in my ears 'One person cannot save a country on his own. All interested parties should contribute to it.'"

Erdogan to Visit Diyarbakir Today

All papers report that on Tuesday, Prime Minister Erdogan will travel to the mainly Kurdish city of Diyarbakir to announce an 'Action Plan' for the Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP). Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak says the five-year plan will cost USD 12.5 billion. Erdogan is expected to be accompanied by cabinet ministers and 75 Kurdish members of parliament. The AKP said the PM would focus on the GAP project and economic issues instead of political matters.

Meanwhile, Diyarbakir Mayor Osman Baydemir said he will not participate in Erdogan's program today, saying the PM had not called on his municipality during earlier visits to the city. Baydemir said Erdogan was visiting the city not "as a Prime Minister," but "like a political party leader." Turkey's main Kurdish party DTP said Erdogan's 'Southeast Action Plan' was actually a "political investment" for the forthcoming municipal elections.

Greek Army Chief Grapsas Meets General Buyukanit

Hurriyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others report the Greek Chief of the General Staff, General Dimitrios Grapsas, met his Turkish counterpart General Yasar Buyukanit in Ankara. General Grapsas said Turkey and Greece were lucky to have had great leaders such as Ataturk and Venizelos. "Venizelos and Ataturk worked hard for peace between the two nations after the war. Our duty should be remaining on their footsteps," said Grapsas. Buyukanit voiced pleasure for hosting General Grapsas in Turkey. "If we, soldiers, provide a secure environment, then politicians will be able to set up better dialogue," emphasized Buyukanit.

Papers report the visit coincided with a Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) statement criticizing the Greek officials' participation in commemorations of the alleged "genocide" of Pontic Greeks in the

Black Sea region after World War I. The MFA statement said the commemorations harmed "the atmosphere of peace and confidence" the two countries were trying to build. In 1994, the Greek Parliament endorsed a law claiming that Pontic Greeks had been subject to genocide in Anatolia.

Barzani Visits the U.S.

Mainstream Sabah report Nechirvan Barzani, the PM of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG,) told VOA after meeting Friday with President Bush that the KRG was "committed to combat terror" but the problem between the PKK and Turkey required a "political solution." Barzani also said the President of the Kurdish region, Massoud Barzani, is expected to visit the US in the near future. The Kurdish administration in northern Iraq said Barzani's talks in Washington with President Bush, Vice President Cheney, Secretary Rice, and Defense Secretary Gates had been "excellent and productive," according to Sabah.

'Diyanet' Webpage: Flirting is Adultery

Liberal Radikal reports Turkey's Religious Affairs Directorate (Diyanet) says on its website that "all illegitimate relationships between men and women, including flirting, amounts to adultery." An article on the Diyanet webpage warns that men and women were "sexually arousing" for each other, therefore the sexes needed to "stay distanced" from each another. The article also says it was "inappropriate" for women to travel alone, or put on perfumes outside their homes because strong scents could be "sexually arousing" for men.

TV News:
CNN Turk

Domestic News

- Parliament Speaker Koksal Toptan said the Court of Appeals (Yargitay) should not have discussed its concerns regarding the lawsuit banning the AKP in public.
- First Lady Hayrunnisa Gul triggered controversy when she wanted to transfer 35 pieces, including paintings, armchairs and tables used by Ottoman Sultans, from Istanbul's Dolmabahce Palace to the Presidential Palace in Ankara.
- IMF Turkey representative Hossein Samiei said the Turkish government needs to undertake additional measures to meet its targets for 2009.

International News

- Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said Monday Israel had made no commitment to Syria to pull out of the Golan Heights.
- "The Syrian leadership will not abandon the front lines until all threats from the Zionist entity have disappeared," said Iranian President Ahmadinejad during a meeting with the Syrian Defense Minister General Hassan Turkmani in Tehran.
- The Taliban said it will fight on till the last foreign soldier is driven out of Afghanistan, but their door is always open to talks with other Afghan opposition groups.

WILSON